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The American Missions' Share in the Regeneration and Defense of Bulgaria

by
Rev. Tzvetko S. Bagranoff



*American Bulgarian
Good Neighbor League*

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— 1947 —

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The Crimean war of 1854 had attracted the attention of even the United States toward the Near East. Then for the first time foreign correspondents were allowed on the scene of action. English and American newspaper men considered themselves happy to be able to survey at short range the bloody Sebastopol charges. England's prestige in consequence of Russia's defeat in that war was enormously enhanced in the East and in the Ottoman Empire in particular. She thus became the decisive political factor in the capital of the sultans. Together with Englishmen, however, Americans too, became "persona grata" with the Porte.

Only about three years after the conclusion of the Crimean war there arrived and settled in Turkey a foreign representation which was a purely religious body of men whose chief aim was to enlighten and save humanity, and vindicate truth wherever found.

The American Methodist Episcopal Church and the American Board of Foreign Missions could find no more opportune moment for the establishment of new stations of their philanthropic work, and from that period on began the noble endeavors of American religious organizations in Southeastern Europe, the history of which is intimately connected with the Bulgarian regeneration. Eighty-seven years ago, therefore, was laid the foundation of the Balkan branch of American Missions. A religious lighthouse was planted at the Golden Horn and Bosphorus, from which commenced to radiate spiritual light, truth, service and self-abnegation, virtues almost forgotten in that part of the globe which had once been the center of Christianity and the seat of the greatest of empires.

The establishment of a branch of the American Missions in the Balkans was not a welcome event in the eyes of the Eastern Orthodoxy. But, although the American religious

pioneers in the Balkans did not at first find a warm reception in their new field, they, nevertheless, set to work with earnestness and determination.

One noteworthy fact in connection with the opening of the Balkan field of the American Missionary undertaking was the circumstance, that when the first Missionary group of workers arrived in Constantinople, they little imagined that their greatest and most successful work would be developed among the Bulgarians. In fact, some of them had not even heard of that name before. It is related that when they reached Constantinople they were astonished to hear of the existence in the Balkans of a "compact, very industrious and sober race, and the most populous in the Peninsula."

In 1856 Dr. Albert S. Long, one of the first missionaries, a distinguished scholar and author, had made a tour through Bulgaria, and on returning to Constantinople was filled with enthusiasm and hope, as he had discovered a rich and exceedingly promising field for missionary work, among a people "burning for knowledge and education." That was the signal for starting up a noble enterprise, and for the establishment by the American Missionary Board of one of its most important branches in the world. The able and the energetic religious apostles who came to the Balkans at that period were the Reverend G. Merriam, J. F. Clarke, G. L. Marsh, J. W. Baird, J. H. House and others, who successively established themselves in Bulgaria and some of them later on in Macedonia, in spite of the stubborn opposition of the Bulgarian Exarchate and clergy. In 1890 the American Missions in Bulgaria could claim to their credit a well-equipped Collegiate and Theological Institute, and a modern Girl's Boarding School at Samokov, and a boarding school for girls at Lovetch, and another at Monastir, Macedonia, not to mention the springing up of primary schools in nearly every important city throughout the Balkans. Protestant churches were found in many centers with the result that thriving parishes were built up at Bansko, Radovich, Monastir, etc., in Macedonia and at Yambol, Sofia, Plovdiv, Samokov, Lovetch, Shumen, Varna and other places in Bulgaria proper.

The Turkish government in the course of time commenced to accuse the missionaries, their schools and churches, as be-

ing one of the principal causes for the insurrectionary disturbances in Macedonia and throughout its domains. The Turk was right, only he had to learn too late the truth that, "if the true spark of civil and religious liberty is kindled, it will burn."

Whatever may be said against the American Missionaries in general, one thing is certain, and that is, that they are the least tainted class of people in the world. They are most sincere devotees of truth. Down-trodden humanity owes much to the missionary, for acting as the spokesman and pleader of its cause, and the fearless denunciator of its oppressors.

When in 1876 the English Government pledged to uphold the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, declared there were no massacres of Bulgarians, three American missionaries were courageous enough to controvert a British Prime Minister's statement, and the world since then knows that, in truth, there were massacres, which led to Gladstone's famous philippics and Tsar Alexander's liberating dash across the Danube. Gladstone and Alexander of Russia indeed are truly credited with saving Bulgaria from the grip of the sultans, but those who are versed in the actual facts know also that the Great American apostles and educators, the Reverend Doctor Long, President Washburn, the Reverend J. F. Clarke, McGahan and others, who at the very scenes of bloodshed and carnage, are the men whose prestige was risked at their decision to brave the world by speaking out the ugly facts, and thereby save a nation.

Such edifying examples of manliness may be multiplied by the thousand. The American Missions, if destroyed, would have to be recreated for they have proved an organic necessity for the defense of truth and the preservation of man's conscience.

Mr. D. Misheff, a distinguished Bulgarian writer, deputy and member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, in one of his recent productions touching on the Bulgar-American relations, makes the following portrayal of the American missionary:

"American and English pioneers, some with their speech, others with their pen, third by means of their enlightened influence and authority, prepared the Bulgarian

war of liberation in 1877, and paved the way for the rush of the armies of Alexander II across the Danube in pursuit of the Ottoman hordes. These were: Gladstone, Schuyler, McGahan, Dr. Long, President Washburn, Sir Edwin Pears and others. Without the initiative of these philanthropic men, Tsar Alexander of Russia would have found his decision blocked by the veto of suspicious Europe.

"But it must be remarked here that much earlier than the time of the insurrections of 1875-1876 and the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, did the Bulgarians commence to waken up religiously, educationally, and politically, thanks to the influence of American factors in the Balkans. The translation of the Bible in 1864 was an exploit of Americans headed by the learned scholar, Dr. Riggs, and assisted by the Bulgarian prelate, Neophyte of Rila, and the Bulgarian poet Slaveykoff. Among the most prominent Bulgarian workers for the regeneration of Bulgaria were alumni of American and English schools at Constantinople. The American professors and missionaries in European Turkey had the best opportunity of studying and acquainting themselves with the Balkan peoples. The American missionaries and educators are the only foreigners who had made their residence in Bulgaria, Thrace and Macedonia, and mingled freely with the people. They not only employed the Bulgarian language in their churches and schools, but published books and periodicals in the Bulgarian language, which were read throughout the Balkan Peninsula. The oldest Bulgarian paper, "Zornitza," was founded by the American missionary, Dr. Long. Among its noted editors may be mentioned the eminent scholar, Robert Thomson, A. Tsanoff, a graduate of Amherst College, Rev. Ivan N. Tzakoff and others. Bulgarian literature owes a large number of its best production to American authors.

"In general, no other alien organization has worked so long and so disinterestedly among the Bulgarian people as have the American missionary societies. No other strangers have been able to acquaint themselves so intimately with the every day life of the Balkan nations, in general, and the Bulgarian race, in particular, as the American religious educators. They have seen the Bulgarians while in bondage and in freedom, in time of affliction and in time of joy. They have lived and mingled with them, spoken their language, have become familiar with their home and public life, their manners and customs, their temperament, their mind and soul. According to their testimony, there does not exist another

people more modest, more industrious, more democratic, and more tolerant. Preachers of the Gospel, of truth and true culture, the missionaries live and act in view of what is just and in harmony with their religious precepts. Whatever they say or do, the truth is their guiding principle. They hold allegiance to no party, serve no individual, and are bound to no creed but their own spiritual convictions. In view of such undisputed evidences corroborating the important part Americans have taken in the regeneration of the Bulgarian people, — are we not justified in admitting that Bulgaria owes its revival and independence no less to America than to Russia? Taking into consideration her democratic bent of mind, her democratic institutions, her spirit of toleration, her personal initiative of founding and maintaining her own schools, Bulgaria is a faithful pupil of her great American teacher. All those who love truth cannot disregard this mighty testimony: having spent their lives in Bulgaria, the American missionaries and educators are the most competent persons to refer to, as to whether the Bulgarians are intolerant people, and whether they are capable of the atrocities and crimes of which they were accused. They are living witnesses of the national catastrophies of the Bulgarians during 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916 and 1918, and as such, they best know, that though the Bulgarians had done all in their power to come to an understanding with their neighbors, in 1915 they were compelled to enter the war, not to fight their liberator, Russia, nor to array their bayonets against England and France, neither for any territorial conquest, as ill-intentioned people persist in asserting, but chiefly to free their brethren and realize the reunion of their race.”

To the credit of the American religious toilers must be attributed the existence of two model schools at Samokov, a boys' and a girls' gymnazia,* enjoying full recognition of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and the university. In their seventy years of continued growth these two schools have done no small share in the general education of the Bulgarians throughout the Balkans. Next to the American colleges in Constantinople, these two institutions are the best organized foreign schools in Southeastern Europe. Four able Americans, namely: Drs. Henry House, H. C. Haskell, Robert Thomson and L. F. Ostrander have successfully served as heads of the Boys' College. The Rev. Dr. Henry C. Haskell of Ober-

* Equivalent to a junior college.

lin, Ohio, under whose presidency the author studied and graduated, was one of those religious and intellectual representatives of the American Board, who would have done credit as professor of Theology to any university in America. The son of this great theologian, Dr. Edward Haskell, an authority on the Macedonian question, and the Rev. L. F. Ostrander, for twenty-five years President of the American College at Samokov, Rev. W. P. Clarke, L. D. Woodruff, Rev. T. T. Holway, were among the fifteen or more American teachers in that institution.

Miss Esther Moltbie of Missouri was the first principal of the Girls' College at Samokov who served so long as to see the children and some grandchildren of her first students enrolled in that school. The well-known Miss Ellen Stone was another of the former instructors, and Miss Inez L. Abbot, for fourteen years directed, with great success, the destinies of that American College.

The other American institutions which have been exceedingly useful elevating agencies in the education of the Bulgarian people are the Boarding school at Monastir, the Industrial School of Salonica, Greece, and the Boarding school at Lovetch in Northern Bulgaria, the latter being maintained by the Methodist Episcopal Church. Miss Kate Blackburn of Jacksonville, Illinois, after thirty years of marvelous and beautiful service as head of the Lovetch School, retired amid the protests and the sincere regrets of the officials and people of the city of Lovetch and returned to her native home to spend her last days. Many Bulgarian graduates from these schools have also taught in them. Two of these were the Rev. and Mrs. T. S. Bagranoff who taught in Samokov and Lovetch colleges respectively and later came to the United States, and in 1907 founded the Near East Mission in Metropolitan St. Louis among Bulgarians and other Balkan peoples in which ministry they have served for forty years and are still serving.

Nearly all pastors and teachers connected with the Protestant Mission work in Bulgaria and Macedonia have received their training in those schools. A considerable number of former students occupy important positions in the public and private life of Bulgaria. Several of Bulgaria's foremost

judges, authors and educators are graduates of the American Colleges in Constantinople and the rest missions' institutions. Dr. C. Stoiloff, now dead, for many years was a prime minister and the leader of the strongest political party in Bulgaria. Also Dr. Ivan Guesheff, one of the ablest men in Bulgaria, and who served his country as prime minister before and at the time of the Balkan wars, are Robert College graduates. Professor Stefan Panaretoff, a classmate of Dr. Stoiloff, was a professor in Robert College, and during the World War I served ably as representative of Bulgaria in Washington. The twin colleges looming up dominantly upon the shore of the Bosphorus, together with their sister American institutions in Bulgaria and Macedonia, may justly be said to be America in the Near East. They have been faithful interpreters of the American ideas, principles and culture. It is, on the other hand, noteworthy of mention, the fact that Bulgaria has officially shown her appreciation by granting to the American missionaries a beautiful site near the capital, Sofia, where some twenty modern buildings were erected and the two schools at Samokov were transferred.

American missionary literature is another very important factor in the regenerating role played by the missionaries in Bulgaria. "Zornitza," founded in 1862, was the first paper published in the Bulgarian language. Its founder, Dr. Albert S. Long, was later on, for many years, professor in Robert College. It suffices to mention the names of its subsequent editors, such as Dr. Nehemiah Byington, Robert Thomson, A. Tsanoff and Rev. D. Gradinaroff. The name of Mr. Gradinaroff is familiar to many Christian people of St. Louis, who saw him in 1910-1913 as a pioneer missionary to the Slavic peoples of St. Louis. This hero of the Cross "finished his course" on the 9th day of May, 1913. The weekly "Zornitza" has brought sunshine and countless blessings to thousands of Bulgarian families up to the present day.

Providence decreed that to two American divines and to two Bulgarian scholars should go the chief glory of giving to the Bulgarian race, just awakening from its centuries-long political and religious lethargy, a standard translation of the Scriptures in its spoken language. After several years of arduous, but rewarding labor, exerted by four pious and in-

spired men, Dr. Riggs, Dr. Long, the Prelate Neophite of Rila and the foremost Bulgarian poet P. Slaveykoff, the Mission presented the Bulgarians with a Bible of its own and understood by all. That exploit is an epochal event in the history of the Bulgarian people, and it alone was sufficient to create a powerful moral bond between America and Bulgaria.

Addenda

The following letters bear an eloquent testimony of the unshakable faith of the American missionaries in the Bulgarian people and their righteous cause for which Bulgaria fought and suffered at the hands of her greedy neighbors and selfish European diplomacy.

A DEFENSE OF BULGARIA

By the Rev. Robert Thomson

To the Editor of the British Weekly.

Dear Sir:

I trust that again you will generously grant me some of your valuable space to make a statement on behalf of Bulgaria in this her hour of trial and need, when all those who know her best seem to have turned against her.

The statement that I wish to make is in connection with the awful charges of atrocity that have been brought against Bulgaria in Macedonia.

As soon as this country was fairly at war with her neighbours, her postal and telegraphic communication was cut off, even through Roumania, which was not at war with her. That was in the first week in July. For some fifteen or eighteen days Bulgaria remained absolutely isolated, receiving no foreign mail, and was unable to send out any. After that time the delayed mails were slowly allowed to enter the country, and since then have kept on coming, though much delayed; but only five days ago for the first time we were notified that we could once more send out foreign letters. I call your readers' special attention to this. Why was this done? It cannot have been a purely military measure, otherwise both the incoming and the outgoing foreign mails would either have been released together after the fifteen or eighteen days or else have been blocked together up to five days ago. The reason became apparent as soon as Bulgaria was allowed to learn what was happening outside. She learned that her encircling enemies had published all over the world extraordinary allegations in regard to her and brought terrible charges against her, as a consequence of which public sentiment had turned against her; and these charges Bulgaria, in her enforced isolation, has been unable to refute. That is the plot that her enemies carried out against her, calculating that in this way they would be left free to despoil her, as no one would care to lift hand or voice in her defense. They understood that falsehoods, with six weeks' start of the truth, would

practically never to be overtaken, and would be able to do irreparable damage to the country which they desired to crush.

The allegations and charges may be divided into three classes.

THE CHARGES MADE

The first class concerns military matters, and is, for the purpose of this letter, of comparatively little importance. Bulgaria's armies were represented as flying before the Servian and Greek armies, which were to enter Sofia and there dictate peace. As a matter of fact, as soon as Bulgaria was able to transport her troops from the Marmora to her western frontiers, she drove both Greeks and Servians before her. I refrain from the several most interesting and piquant particulars that might be added, and only remark that politics are a hard master, for, on account of the triple entente, it has made our leading newspapers unwilling to let the public know that Russia, whose fear and jealousy of Bulgaria is as great as that of the Balkan States, has been the prime though hidden mover in all that has been done to thwart and humiliate this country.

The second class of charges and allegations concerns the internal conditions of Bulgaria. She was represented as being in a state of revolution and anarchy, the King's life several times threatened, all foreigners — and in particular all missionaries — massacred, so that Roumania was obliged to occupy the country, and Greece and Servia professed to have done so, to save it from itself. These statements have not one stone of foundation on which to stand. That there was a little grumbling at the prolonged fighting especially as the harvest was coming on, is true; but one word beyond that is untruth. The country was throughout absolutely quiet and calm; and no one, Bulgarian or foreign, had one moment's fear or misgiving.

THE ATROCITY CHARGES DENIED

The third class of charges concerns the atrocities alleged against Bulgaria in Macedonia. Here I would ask your readers to take into consideration the following things: (1) As the charges against Bulgaria on this score have evidently been the chief string in her enemies' bow, does not the plot of

postal and telegraphic silence imposed upon her throw strong suspicion on their trustworthiness? (2) As the allegations and charges under the first two classes have been shown to be not even gross exaggerations of misrepresentations, but absolutely and diametrically the opposite of the truth, is there any reason why those under the third class should be of a different character? (3) As the last of the fighting was in the regions of the south and south-west of this town, we have been obliged to harbour in our midst an immense number of refugees (Bulgarians) from Macedonia; and since the demobilisation began many thousands of soldiers have passed through our town on their way to their homes. Amongst these refugees and soldiers there has been a considerable number of Protestants, people whom we have known for long and who command our confidence.

THE EVIDENCE OF PASTORS

Several of them are our own ex-students, who have been pastors and one a teacher in various parts of the country, whose word we can absolutely rely on. These persons, as well as others of the number, several of us missionaries have personally and carefully examined as to the truth of these charges; and on one occasion the close examination was shared in by the correspondent of a well-known newspaper. We have elicited the following facts. While there may have been cases of excesses due to the unprincipled character of some individuals when not under the eye of their superiors, the grosser charges and the general charges against the army are indignantly and empathically denied. Not one could tell of a single case of perpetrated outrage — done by the Bulgarian Army — that he had seen or heard of. The Bulgarian Army, like every other army, has had from time to time to resort to stern military measures in dealing with treachery and so forth; and it is possible that some such deeds, or the deeds of some of the irresponsible revolutionary bands, may have been seized hold of, magnified, and construed into these charges; but the charges of atrocities are false. One pastor saw with his own eyes the Greek Bishop of Doran alive and well days after he was said to have been tortured and killed by the Bulgarians. Another pastor gave us case

after case of persons whom he had met with in the disputed regions, some of them Turks, others Jews, others Armenians, who were eagerly hoping for, or had actually gone out to seek, some place where they could be under Bulgarian rule, so that they might escape the oppression and cruelty of the Greek and Servian rule. Another of our pastors, who had been in service in Dede-agatch, told us that even the Greeks of that town had said they hoped they would not come under Greek rule; they preferred the Bulgarian. In a word, the evidence gathered is so strongly and universally negative, and harmonises so well with what our long acquaintance with the Bulgarian character would lead us to believe of them, that we feel that these horrible charges should not for one moment be believed or even suspected to be true till proved to the very hilt. (4) As soon as it was known what the enemy had been saying, King Ferdinand and his Government demanded an international committee of investigation. It is the merest nonsense to say that it was safe for them to make such a demand, since it was too late to prove anything. If the investigation were properly gone about, it would not be too late a year hence; how much less a month or two after the alleged deeds? (5) The Government has sent an official deputation to London, ready to face the charges, and to make explanations, and to court inquiry.

The Turks, with their usual astuteness, have taken up the cry, and are now trying to justify their return into Thrace on the ground that they must put a stop to Bulgarian atrocities. Grim irony. But it is strange that people should not realise that it is no more than a parrot-cry caught up from the European newspapers. If the Greeks and Servians have little or no ground for the charges that they have brought against Bulgaria in Macedonia, still less have the Turks in Thrace.

Such, then, is the statement that I wish to make on behalf of Bulgaria. I have no desire to make her out as faultless; but I do desire that your readers should know that she wishes, and is able to meet, the awful charges that have been brought against her. This is the plot by which Greece, Servia, and Roumania hope to overcome the demand for the revision of the unjust Treaty of Bucharest, and by the help of which

the Turks hope to be permitted to remain in Thrace. I am bound to add that, had Roumania, Serbia and Greece allowed their national life to be leavened for the last sixty years by the Gospel as Bulgaria has done, I hardly think they could have stooped to this treacherous and cruel course of action. Seriously, I do not believe that Bulgaria could have acted so; I seriously do not.

When Europe, through the Treaty of Berlin, revised the Treaty of San Stefano, it was our country's sad distinction to lead in cutting down the Bulgaria which Russia had created to little more than half its rightful size; and thereby we really made inevitable the wars of the last ten months. We have now an opportunity to correct as far as may be that huge blunder. I earnestly trust that we may not throw away the opportunity. Let Britain be assured that if she supports Bulgaria now, she will not only be retrieving her own position in the eyes of this people, and not only undoing the wrongs that her enemies are heaping upon her, but she will be strengthening by far the most enlightened, liberal and progressive of the Balkan States, a State that is going to take the lead here no matter what happens, and whose friendship we should do well not to despise.

Samokov, Bulgaria
Aug. 20, 1913

To His Excellency,

The President of the United States.

Excellency:

The missionaries of the American Board residing in Bulgaria follow with pride and sympathy your work in behalf of a just and permanent world peace, and on the eve of the conference send you sincere and loyal greetings.

In fulfillment of your high purpose to apply the principle of nationality alike to conquered and conquering nations, we respectfully urge that in the settlement of boundaries in the Balkans due and full consideration be given to the evidence of unbiased witnesses, that the world may be spared a repetition of such disastrous wrongs as were perpetrated against France in 1871 and against the Bulgarian nation in 1878 and 1913.

It is the testimony of our Mission, which has worked without political purpose among Balkan peoples for sixty years, that in the territory of our Macedonian field, extending from Skopia and Ochrida to Drama, the great bulk of the population is Bulgarian in origin, language and customs, and forms an integral part of the Bulgarian nation. As the result of travel throughout the Adrianople vilayet for the distribution of relief we are convinced also that the non-Moslem population, with the exception of the literate, is almost entirely Bulgarian.

Entreating for you divine guidance and support in the tremendous task of solving present world problems, respectfully yours,

Missionaries of the American Board,
Signed: Leroy F. Ostrander

Samokov, Bulgaria
Dec. 11, 1918

Lyle D. Woodruff
H. B. King

Samokov, Bulgaria
December 16, 1918

The Honorable Elihu Root,

With the American Delegation to the Peace Conference.
Paris

Dear Sir:

On the strength of the Hamilton College ties that exist between yourself and my father, Dr. L. A. Ostrander, '65, and those between my teacher, Prof. Root, and his son, Oren, my classmate in '94, as well as my own acquaintance with you, I venture to send you personally a few lines in the hope that they may reach you before the momentous decisions of the great conference are taken.

For the past seventeen years I have been connected with the Balkan Mission of the American Board, which for sixty years has carried on evangelistic, educational and industrial work among various nations of the Balkan Peninsula, but principally among the Bulgarians. Returning from America just as Bulgaria entered the war in September, 1915, we have been in Samokov during the three years of her participation in the conflict. Most of this time we have been practically

cut off from detailed knowledge of America. The last letter received from my family bears the date of January 25th, 1917, and during this period of silence we have received very few papers or magazines. Just at present the isolation of the country is complete, as all communication is absolutely controlled by opponents.

In such circumstances we know very little of the attitude of America and the world toward Bulgaria, but there are indications which cause us to think that she will not be allowed representation at the peace conference and that her cause will not be presented at all. Believing that much can and should be said for Bulgaria's case, I would entreat you, Mr. Root, if the above suppositions are correct, to use your great influence, in the interest of justice and fair play, to secure a hearing for Bulgaria in this hour when she is isolated, gagged and helpless. She wishes only justice, and believing that that can be secured to her by the application of President Wilson's fourteen points, those who all along opposed and deplored Bulgaria's participation in the war on the side of the central powers brought about the change in the situation that so soon led to the general armistice. Their only hope is now in England and America and the policy of the President, and surely the Anglo-Saxon sense of magnanimity and fair play will not permit this little country to be deprived of the right of presenting her case when the fate of nations for years to come is being decided. There are those who are able and ready to give testimony to this matter, and if it is permitted to me to make a suggestion, it is that Hon. D. I. Murphy, American Consul General in Sofia, Mr. A. V. Walker, Secretary of the American Legation in Sofia, and Rev. L. D. Woodruff, of Samokov, should be given a chance to be heard. All of them are thoroughly familiar with the situation through personal knowledge, observation and study.

The world desires a righteous and lasting peace, and to this end justice must be done to Bulgaria as well as to other countries in the coming peace conference.

I enclose a copy of a statement sent to Sir Edward Grey and to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the five other great powers at the close of the Balkan wars in 1913, and

also a copy of a telegram recently dispatched by post to President Wilson.

Assuring you of our deep and prayerful interest in the great task of settling the world's peace, in which our country is to take so prominent and responsible a part, I remain, dear sir,

Very respectfully yours,
(Signed) Leroy F. Ostrander

Samokov, Bulgaria
December 20, 1918

Colonel House,

With the American Commission to the Peace Conference,
Paris

Dear Sir:

You are doubtless well aware of the fact that the American Board, of Boston, has maintained a mission in the Balkans for the past sixty years. This mission has worked uninterruptedly among various races of the Peninsula, but principally among the Bulgarians. Its members have lived with them in times of peace, and have shared their trials and sufferings during periods of massacre, war and revolution. Some of them have been here on the spot all during Bulgaria's three years' participation in the present war, and have followed as closely as possible the development of events and her share in them.

Now that the great conflict is over and terms of peace must be considered, we fear that the same injustice is being done to Bulgaria that was perpetrated upon her in 1913 when she was isolated and gagged, while her opponents circulated grossly exaggerated or maliciously false reports about her, to which she had no chance to reply. There are two sides to every question, and justice requires that both sides should be heard before a final decision is taken. Bulgaria asks only a fair hearing and justice, and, therefore, we plead on her behalf that she should be given the right to present her case before the conference that is to decide her fate for years to come. If it is not possible for Bulgarian delegates to attend and do this, then there are Americans, resident in Sofia, Salonika and Monastir, who thoroughly understand the situation

and who could be called upon to testify. It surely is in accord with our Anglo-Saxon sense of justice and fair play that the opportunity should be given for such testimony to be heard.

Bulgaria is not actuated by greed for foreign territory. She simply desires the uniting into one organic whole of all these in the Balkan Peninsula who, in her conscientious opinion, constitute the Bulgarian nation. For this she worked, suffered and bled since the rejuvenation of her national existence in 1878. This is fully in accord with President Wilson's principle of nationalities, the promulgation of which was largely influential in inducing the Bulgarians to discontinue their share in the great world conflict. They ask for nothing more than a just application of this principle, based on actual conditions, to the solution of the Balkan problem, and their one hope now is that the President will successfully carry through his program to which he is so unequivocally committed, for all nations alike, large or small, victors or vanquished.

As evidence on one phase of the Balkan problem, we venture to enclose a copy of a statement made by American missionaries at the close of the Balkan wars in 1913 and sent by them to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the six great European powers, though not received until the work of the Bucharest conference was nearly finished; and together with it an explanatory map covering the region referred to. We also enclose a copy of a communication to President Wilson prepared as a telegram, but actually transmitted by courier through the American Legation at Sofia.

Earnestly hoping that the labors of the great conference will result in a lasting and universally just peace, and proud of the part that our country is taking for the accomplishment of this high end, we remain.

Very respectfully yours,
Missionaries of the American Board
Signed: Leroy T. Ostrander
L. D. Woodruff
H. B. King

AMERICAN INFLUENCE IN BULGARIA

By the Rev. Edward B. Haskell, D.D.

Missionary of the American Board, 1891-1933

Founder of the Agrarian University in Bulgaria

It was about the middle of the nineteenth century that the Bulgarians, a race whose very existence was almost forgotten by the outside world, attracted the attention of Cyrus Hamlin, Elias Riggs and others of the great missionary statesmen then regnant in Constantinople. In fact as early as 1841 or 1842 Dr. Riggs, the wonderful linguist (who was a leading member of each of the committees which translated the Bible into modern Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Bulgarian) issued a little paper-covered Bulgarian grammar in English. He stated in the preface that he was prompted to do so by his hope that his countrymen would be aroused some day to take an interest in the Bulgarians, and would then find his grammar ready to aid them in acquiring the language. His hope and faith were justified when the American Methodists began a work between the Danube and the Balkan Mts. in 1857, and the American Board authorized its Western Turkey Mission to "take on" the Bulgarians south of the Balkans in 1858.

Returning to the Bulgarian work, one of the first moves made by the missionaries was the establishment of a monthly paper, the *Zornitza*, or "Morning Star," which later became a weekly. There was a hiatus of several months between the appearance of the first and second numbers. Having made his perfectly reasonable petition to the Turkish authorities for a permit to publish, the editor put out his first number with innocent confidence that the "formalities" would be over in a few days. "Thereby hangs a tale" worth repeating. One day during the months of waiting the American Minister met the Grand Vizier at some function and took advantage of the opportunity to ask,

"By the way, your Excellency, what are the prospects for that little Bulgarian paper which some of my countrymen wish to publish?"

"You mean that republican journal?" said the Vizier.

"Oh, no, your Excellency," replied the Minister, "you have

been misinformed. It is not to be a political but a religious sheet."

"But is it not to be Protestant?"—"Yes, your Excellency."

"Well, Protestantism is republicanism."

The wily autocrat sensed the situation with unerring instinct. Without any effort on their part to instigate revolution or even to stir up discontent, it undoubtedly is true that the missionaries hastened the overthrow of Turkish rule. The following story showing the feeling of another autocrat was told me by a classmate. He was traveling in the Balkans in the late nineties and chanced to be at Cetinje when Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria was visiting Prince Nicholas of Montenegro. My friend had introductions to royalty which caused him to be invited to accompany the two princes on a walk. In order to sound him out, he casually remarked to Ferdinand,

"By the way, you have some American missionaries in Bulgaria, haven't you? What do you think of them?"

"Well, they are rather a nuisance, as they divide up the people," said his Highness.

"But," broke in Nicholas with a slap on Ferdinand's shoulder, "had there been no American missionaries there would have been no Bulgaria."

"That may be true," replied Ferdinand with a shrug.

The statement of Nicholas was an exaggeration, as was an editorial statement in the London *Times*, some years ago, that the Bulgarians owed their emancipation to the *Zornitza*. But the *Zornitza*, which today is the oldest Bulgarian paper extant, undoubtedly did a great work. While treating all subjects from an evangelical Christian standpoint it never was sectarian, and avoided attacks on the Orthodox Church. It thus entered hundreds of villages never visited by a preacher and was valued by a multitude of Orthodox readers.

Besides the weekly, our publication department prepared many books and tracts which were widely scattered by colporteurs, together with the Scriptures translated by missionaries and published by the British and American Bible Societies. There was very little controversial literature in the output, the truth being presented in a positive form and left to make its way.

The preaching done by the missions has been of the same

nature as their publications, with rarely a reference to or attack upon the Eastern Church. The presentation of truth and the appeals to conscience and will are exactly such as one hears in an ordinary Congregationalist or Methodist pulpit in America. A two-fold result has followed both the preaching and the literature. Some people have felt that the old Church did not furnish them the spiritual food which they wished and so have organized evangelical churches. Others have been stirred to try to be better Christians within the old Church. Among the latter a strong reform party has arisen, including many of the younger priests. The text books for teaching religion in the public schools have been so purged of superstition as to make one pastor call them "evangelized."

So much has been written of the influence of Robert College and the Women's College at Constantinople on Bulgarian political and social life that it is unnecessary to say more here. Those institutions have been patronized by the comparatively wealthy, while the middle and poorer classes have turned to the less widely known mission schools at Samokov. It was a striking fact that these schools never had been so full as in 1917-18 when so many were insisting that we ought to declare war on Bulgaria. I would not be understood as implying that Bulgaria owes her educational system—one of the most thorough in Europe—to America. The Bulgar has been inclined to overestimate the value of intellectual as compared with spiritual training, and would have sought education anyhow. The establishment of American schools among the people near the beginning of their national renaissance doubtless contributed to their intellectual advance. And those among them who value character as an educational product value our schools. Whatever be the cause, the Bulgarians spend annually for education double the amount per capita spent by any other Balkan race, and have reduced their illiteracy, in forty years of emancipation, to less than half what it is in the adjoining States after their eighty years of freedom.

My own quarter century of mission life has mostly been spent in Macedonia, where I have formed warm friendships with members of all the Balkan races. I realize that the period of work among them has been too short, and the human and financial forces employed too inadequate, to transform

the national life. The Bulgars have proved the most responsive to American Christian influence of any Balkan people. Yet it would be presumptuous to claim that all their progress is due to it. It has had some share, however, in producing the following results:

1. A religious tolerance unapproached elsewhere in the Levant.*

Bulgaria alone of the Balkan States recognizes the legality of marriages performed for its subjects by Protestant pastors, exempts such pastors from military service the same as Orthodox priests, and frees their church buildings from taxation.

2. The temperance cause has made great progress in Bulgaria. Many temperance societies have been organized, which publish a monthly organ, and an extensive literature created. The Ministry of Education co-operated with the late Dr. J. F. Clarke in sending this literature to every school in Bulgaria and Macedonia. From 1907 to the end of 1910 Dr. Clarke published 350,000 copies of temperance tracts with 4,422,200 pages. Undoubtedly Bulgaria will be the first Balkan State to adopt any temperance legislation.

3. The great advance of socialism in Bulgaria shows an interest in human welfare, an idealism and a spirit of brotherhood which are essentially Christian virtues. The movement challenges the missions to be more alert in proclaiming a sane social Gospel.

4. There can be no doubt that it was in response to the American Christian influences which have been at work among them for 60 years that the Bulgarians so stubbornly resisted the tremendous pressure put upon them by Germany and Austria to break relations with the United States in April, 1917. A leading statesman said to me, "We owe all that we are to America, and if there ever is war between the two countries it will be by her act and not ours."

The fact that we did not declare war on her will create a more friendly feeling toward us in Bulgaria than ever before. If, while recognizing the rights and aspirations of the other Balkan States, we also grant the Macedonians the privilege

* The Jews and Moslems alike enjoy the civil, political and religious rights as the Christians do.

of self-determination, Bulgarian gratitude will know no bounds, and the American missions will see before them opportunities which it will be difficult to live up to. After all, was not "Mr. Britling" right when, with vision clarified by a great sorrow, he said, "It does not matter in the least what we owe to Serbia or what we owe to Italy. We have got to set his world on a different footing. We have got to set up the world at last—on justice and reason. The Treaty of Bucharest [1913] was an evil treaty. It must be undone. Whatever this German king of Bulgaria does, that treaty must be undone and the Bulgarians united again into one people. They must have themselves, whatever punishment they deserve, they must have nothing more, whatever reward they win." No juster word has been spoken.

